MAP #1

Córdoba, Argentina

Iconoclasistas
(Buenos Aires)

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Critical mapping

Iconoclasistas,
Pablo Ares and Julia Risler

We are a duo who has been working together since 2006, combining graphic art, creative workshops and collective research to produce resources for free circulation, appropriation and use. We do this in order to strengthen communication, forge networks of solidarity and promote practices of collaboration and resistance. From the start, our objective was to generate visual devices that could communicate scenarios of injustice and inequality; to provide tools that boost understanding and encourage thoughtful awareness and critical knowledge when it comes to devising transformative actions, organisation and resistance.

The first experience in which these materials took on a life of their own came out of a project that aimed to make statistics understandable. It was called *Anuario Volante 2006* and it consisted of a small book of sixteen flyers in the form of a set of postcards, which offered an overview of the economic, social and political situation in Argentina the previous year. The flyers ("*volantes*") were based on the figures published in the media, and the idea was to use graphics as a way of intervening in the cold percentages that gave an account of unemployment, poverty, infant mortality, gender-based violence, the distribution of wealth and so forth. We wanted to shake off ignorance about the complexity of these social issues.

All through 2007, we continued to survey the problems of our region and to think up devices that would allow us to visualise and communicate them quickly, to create links and favor accountability. This gave rise to *Cosmovisión Rebelde*, a constantly changing project that included a series of artifacts that played with our understanding by means of:

Cartographies of inequality: maps of representative areas, with the most pressing problems marked on them;

Bird's eye views: diagrams that synthesised and organised the most prominent aspects of the issues in question;

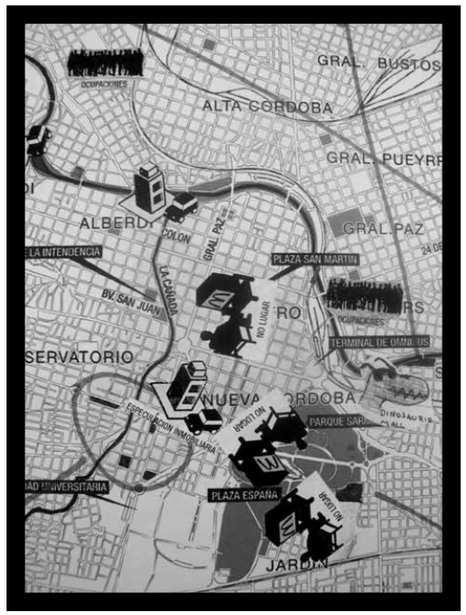
Landscapes revealed: postcards that pointed out links between different situations, and those responsible for them, revealing conflicts, and

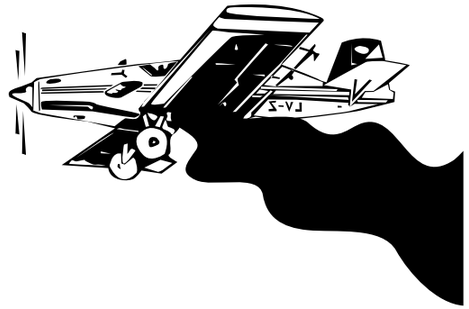
Mobile snapshots: comic strips that told stories and took us into important, everyday scenarios.

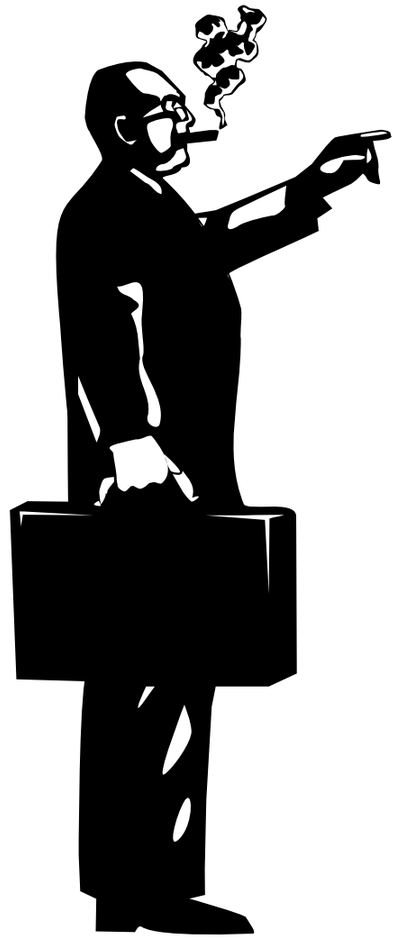
The first *cosmovision* revolved around *The Postmodern City*. It showed how the spread of capital to all areas of life ends up shaping public spaces, the way we move through them, our way of interacting with others, the role of the mass media and advertising, the ghettoization of some areas and the neglect of others, as well as other issues that were surveyed. It was a visual exploration of what makes the city function and how different social agents constantly modify and transform its structure.

The first *cosmovision* was designed with a megalopolis like Buenos Aires in mind. But as we travelled and mapped different cities in Argentina, we gradually realised that the same situations were being repeated at different scales through an economic model based on property speculation, evictions and gentrification, the precarisation of labor, visual and environmental contamination, coercion through control and surveillance, institutional repression and assassinations perpetrated by police forces.

In 2008 we produced a second *cosmovision*, this time on *Neocolonial Looting and the*







Plunder of Common Property. Employing the same graphic artifacts that we had used in the first *cosmovision*, we explored the problems and consequences arising from an extractor-exporter model based on the monoculture of genetically modified soybean crops, agribusinesses and massive open pit mines. This poster was distributed all over the country, arousing the interest of various groups and movements who contacted us to invite us to work with similar approaches in their surrounding territory. This is how the collective mapping workshops were born.

"The map is not the territory"

In 2008 we began to organise collective mapping workshops, encouraging collaborative work on maps and cartographies by designing and releasing a series of tools that, in conjunction with the socialisation of non-expert knowledge and the day-to-day experiences of the participants, make it possible to share knowledge that can then be used for the critical visualisation of the most pressing local problems. When we talk about local territories, we don't just mean the physical space in which we find ourselves, but also the social body and rebel subjectivities.

Mapmaking is one of the principal tools employed by the dominant powers to appropriate territories for utilitarian purposes, not just as a form of spatial planning, but also to set borders that define new occupations and plan strategies of invasion, plunder and appropriation of communal property. As such, the maps commonly circulating in our societies are based on a vision that is imposed onto the territory by the dominant powers in order to create hegemonic representations that are functional to the development of the capitalist model, rationally decoding

the land, classifying natural resources, demographic characteristics and the type of production that can most effectively turn labor power and resources into capital. This scientific approach to the territory, the people who live in it, and common property is supplemented by other monitoring techniques such as video surveillance, biometric identification systems and statistical formulas that interpret situations and provide information to enable the implementation of biopolitical mechanisms that organise, control and discipline those who dwell in a territory.

But the map is not the territory.[1] A connection with a particular territory is established through processes of interpretation, feelings and personal experiences. Maps are not the territory because they are unable to account for the subjectivity of the territorial processes, symbolic representations and imaginaries inherent to them, and the constant mutability and changes that they are subject to. In fact, we humans create and transform territories, and there is no mimetic relationship between the spatial materiality of maps and the imaginary perception of the territory, which is a collective construction shaped through subjective ways of dwelling, moving, perceiving, creating and transforming.

1 This phrase is attributed to Alfred Korzybski (a Polish aristocrat and founder of general semantics), who apparently coined it after his experience as an officer in World War I, when he led a disastrous attack in which his soldiers ended up falling into a pit that was not marked on the map. Gregory Bateson (a North American anthropologist and linguist) completed the phrase by adding "and the name is not the thing named." What they both sought to express was the impossibility of objectifying the significant, emotional dimensions of spaces and linguistic representations.

In that case, why work with maps? To harness a tool that enables us to create critical, collective narratives and to share inputs for the creation of emancipatory practices. We believe that today's societies are characterised by an increasing precariousness that has made its way into many aspects of life: it pierces the urban structure like a surveillance spotlight, weakening social bonds through the rhetoric of fear, abandoning the most basic social rights in public institutions, embodying symbolic violence in the daily imaginary, breaking down the experience of the commons, and short-circuiting perception through constant shock. This is why our workshops turn to tools that allow us to collectively create complex scenarios, deepen critical approaches and encourage alert, active subjectivities that are essential if we are to protect common property, fight against processes of colonization and privatization of the public sphere, and establish new worlds.

Both in terms of the process and the results, the workshops start off as catalysts and then break free and become autonomous by means of the self-management of the needs and desires of the participating groups. A very interesting case study in this sense is the experiences that took place in the city of Córdoba over the past few years, in the wake of the workshops that we began to hold there in 2008.

The first workshops we did were organised by two different groups: the alternative communication department at the public university's School of Information Sciences, and an independent art center that organised innovative projects outside of traditional art circuit. These first workshops led to new contacts that deepened over time, people who we kept meeting again on every trip to the city and in every workshop, to

broaden, change or improve the practice. A journalism student who we met at one of these workshops subsequently mobilised a collective mapping experience in 2011, along with a team of educators in rural and semi-rural areas very close to Córdoba.[2] She wrote an account in which she highlighted the power of mapping as a tool, explaining how it had allowed the group of residents who she worked with to "speak out, as a form of political action that bursts into an everyday context that has become accustomed to the dispossession of individual and communal rights." As she explains it, the collective mapping tool allowed them to

> *visualize our problems and our potential as citizens of the Bamba reserve. We started by setting up a network of rural schools and drawing public attention to the environmental injustice in the neighborhood of Dumesnil. (Ferreyra 2012)*

Following a series of workshops and seminars, the group drew up a plan to protect and regulate the use of the Bamba reserve, and presented it to the municipal government. They are now waiting for a reply.

Meanwhile, we continued to work with Córdoba and in 2009 we traveled to the mountain city to participate in one of the meetings that the Citizen Assemblies Union (UAC) organises in a different part of the country each year. The idea of these gatherings is to come together and discuss the plundering, depredation of natural discourses and environmental and social contamination of each region, in order to socialise forms of organization and resistance, and to plan shared strategies. When we got there, we pinned up a series up maps that showed the contributions

2 See Ferreyra 2012.

made by participants in a mapping exercise that had taken place at a UAC in Jujuy a few months earlier. During the event, people attending the meeting corrected and completed the maps, which then became part of the materials that we used to design the maps of the dispossession stemming from agribusinesses and large-scale open pit mining.[3]

In 2010, we were invited to hold a workshop in an official contemporary art center (the Centro Cultural de España en Córdoba, CCEC). There, we met a group of architects who told us about the territorial work they were planning to do with some university students in a historical working class area of the city, and they said they would like to organise a mapping workshop with us. This workshop was eventually held in 2011, with the aim of working "with residents to try and reconstruct that (which you can't see or touch) on a piece of paper that we call a map: the representation of a collective neighborhood narrative that visualises and values local memory, identity, resources and forms of knowledge; a cartography of the everyday social, architectural and urban history that has not yet been recorded" (Department of Architecture, 2012).

The team designed a series of initial strategies based on a survey of needs and desires that allowed them to collectively devise the steps they would take, drawing on their specialist knowledge of architecture but seeking to improve the living conditions of residents. As they explained, the team took advantage of "'Tuesday markets to hold 'on site' discussion about the public space, facilities and housing projects that the architecture students were working on as part of their education. The students talked to the locals,

3 See [10/09/2012]

conducted interviews and tested possible strategies for architectural intervention that they then continued to explore in design workshops at the university." This project is still going today, and during this time they have organised neighborhood activities and exhibitions to design improvements to the local urban heritage.

In 2011 an eclectic collective of collectives made up of the Julio Cortázar People's Library, Radio La Quinta Pata (FM 93.3) and the Network of Residents and Associations of San Vicente, held a series of mapping days in order to imagine "a different geography for San Vicente." They sent us this thoughtful account of their work:

> *We decided to work with the method that we had learnt from the Iconoclasistas, and in early 2011 we organized a three-day workshop which ended up including the sharing of different kinds of knowledge, political discussions and goals of our projects, descriptions by other agents, and the creation of a luscious neighborhood map. (People's Library, 2012)*

The group met several times and produced different kinds of maps, raising the level of complexity at each step along the way. Eventually, they achieved what they were looking for: "a map showing relief, elevations, plains, lagoons and rivers, which make us see the streets and buildings of our neighborhood as a place where bonds, stories, struggle, quests, obstacles, problems and networks intersect." (People's Library, 2012). In their account they state that their first objective had been achieved, because they had managed to organise "individual knowledge into a new structure, and at the same time create an output that shows and documents this plural heritage.

We use the term "*ruminance*" to describe the action that is common to all these modes of creation, exchange and collaboration that boost activist practices, fuelled by design, graphics, art and communication resources, to intervene in collective agitation, resistance and change. The practice of *ruminance* incorporates elements that are never static – the may be regurgitated, mixed, and swallowed all over again. In this process of reflection, collaborative forms of work are broken down and adapted, improved, extended and deepened, taking into account the contributions and interactions that arise from collective projects and that shatter any illusion of stillness, individualism or quietude.

NOTES

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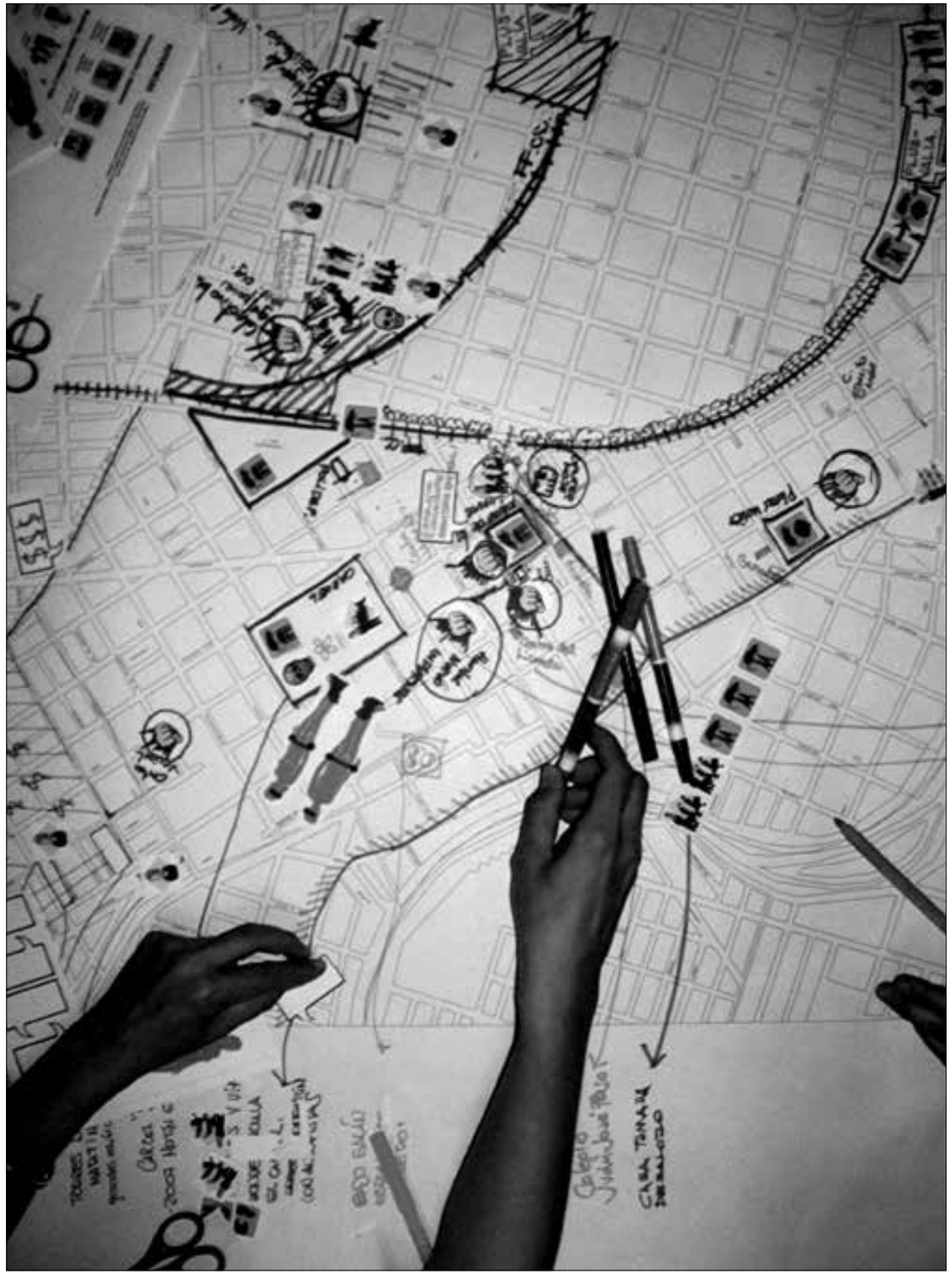


REFERENCIAS PROVINCIA

1
MINA A CIELO ABIERTO

2
PROYECTO DE MINA A CIELO ABIERTO

3
HIDROELECTRICAS

4
PROYECTO DE REPRESA

5
URANIO

6
CONTAMINACION

7
AGUAS CONTAMINADAS

8
SOJA

9
FUMIGACIONES

10
DESMONTE

11
AGRONEGOCIOS

12
TURISMO P/ELITES

13
CRIMINALIZACIÓN DE LA PROTESTA

14
CONTROL

15
ASESINATOS GATILLO FACIL

16
TRATA DE PERSONAS

17
DESALOJOS

18
MIGRANTES

19

TOMA DE TIERRAS

20
RESISTENCIAS

21
ASAMBLEAS

22
LUCHA CAMPESINA

23
PUEBLOS ORIGINARIOS

Preguntas disparadoras

- ¿Dónde se localizan los monocultivos de soja y maíz transgénicos?
- ¿Dónde se fumiga con herbicidas tóxicos?
- ¿Qué zonas están amenazadas por la explotación minera a cielo abierto?
- ¿Qué territorios se han inundado en el último tiempo o por el contrario sufren sequía?
- ¿Qué regiones han sufrido un éxodo de sus habitantes hacia la ciudad?
- ¿Dónde están ubicados los movimientos campesinos, rurales, indígenas organizados?
- ¿Cuáles son las zonas de desmonte y deforestación?
- ¿Qué zonas están vigiladas por policía pública o guardias privados?
- ¿Dónde se proyecta ubicar las plantas de agrocombustibles?

REFERENCIAS CIUDAD

1
BARRIOS PRIVADOS

2
ESPECULACION INMOBILIARIA

3
CENTROS COMERCIALES

4
NO LUGAR

5
TRANSPORTES

6
PCB

7
ANTENAS CELULARES

8
AGUAS CONTAMINADAS

9
AGRONEGOCIOS

10
SOJA

11
FUMIGACIONES

12
GENTRIFICACION

13
ASENTAMIENTOS

14
MIGRANTES

15
CONTAMINACION

16
BASURALES

17
CRIMINALIZACIÓN DE LA PROTESTA

18
CONTROL

19
DESALOJOS

20
ASESINATOS GATILLO FACIL

21
TRATA DE PERSONAS

22

TOMA DE TIERRAS

23
RESISTENCIAS

24
FABRICAS RECUPERADAS

25
ASAMBLEAS

26
LUCHA DOCENTE

27
LUCHA OBRERA

Preguntas disparadoras

- ¿Cuáles son los barrios de altos ingresos? ¿Dónde se ubican los barrios privados/countries?
- ¿Dónde hay zonas gentrificadas, es decir, zonas de expulsión de habitantes para la construcción especulativa? ¿Dónde se construyen las torres de lujo?
- ¿Dónde están los barrios carenciados, los asentamientos, las "ciudades-ghetto"? ¿De dónde proviene el flujo de sus habitantes?
- ¿Dónde se ubican los congestionamientos de tránsito?
- ¿Por dónde pasa el transporte urbano? ¿Con qué frecuencia? ¿Qué lugares están privados de su servicio?
- ¿Dónde se ubican las protestas, las resistencias, las construcciones alternativas?

REFERENCIAS CENTRO

1
ESPECULACION INMOBILIARIA

2
CENTROS COMERCIALES

3
NO LUGAR

4
TRANSPORTES

5
PCB

6
ANTENAS CELULARES

7
AGUAS CONTAMINADAS

8
GENTRIFICACION

9
DESALOJOS

10
ASENTAMIENTOS

11
MIGRANTES

12
CONTAMINACION

13
CRIMINALIZACIÓN DE LA PROTESTA

14
CONTROL

15
ASESINATOS GATILLO FACIL

16
TRATA DE PERSONAS

17
CARTONEO

18
MENDICIDAD

19
RESISTENCIAS

20
FABRICAS RECUPERADAS

21
ASAMBLEAS

22
LUCHA DOCENTE

23
LUCHA OBRERA

24
MARCHAS/PROTESTAS

25
CENTROS CLANDESTINOS DE DETENCION

Preguntas disparadoras

¿Cuáles son las esquinas más concurridas? Dónde se concentra la mayor cantidad de personas?
- ¿Dónde se localizan las zonas comerciales? (centros, shoppings, etc.)
- ¿Dónde se instalan las antenas de telefonía? ¿Y los transformadores de PCB?
- ¿Cuáles son los sitios más contaminados? Dónde están los basurales?
- ¿Dónde se ubica el corazón del poder? (casa de gobierno, legislatura, catedral, comisarías, la city financiera, etc.)
- ¿Cuáles son las áreas donde hay mayor cantidad de vigilancia (policías, gendarmes, cámaras)?
- ¿Dónde se ubican las protestas, las resistencias, las construcciones alternativas?

NO AL TERRORISMO DE ESTADO

PiketeStone

¿QUIÉNES HICIMOS ESTO?

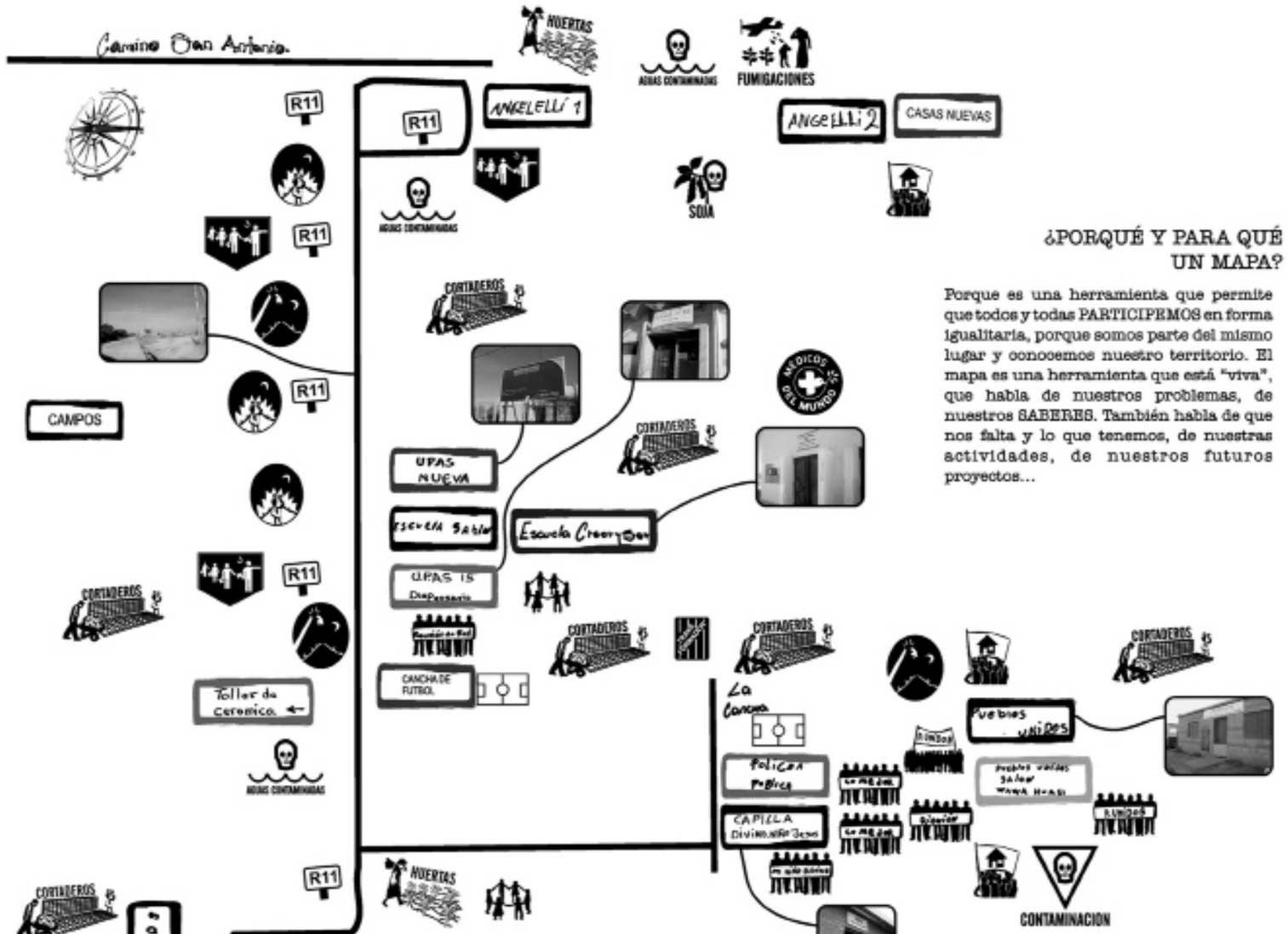
CENPA CREER Y SER: GUERRA ACEITUNO FLORA, MONTAÑO QUINTEROS JHEANET, QUIROGA COLQUE ELIZABETH, BARRIONUEVO RICARDO SEBASTIÁN, VELIS MARÍA, TOKO ZENON LUISA, CUEVA SERGIO, SEBASTIÁN, CUEVA MARCOS EZEQUIEL, CEBALLOS MATÍAS RUBEN, SUVIA ORTEGA NICOLAZA, QUINTEROS ZULMA, AVENDAÑO CORREA DE AMADOR VICTORINA, LENCINA ABIGAIL ANALÍA, MARCA HUATHA ERMINIA, OLGUERA MONTAÑO EMILIANA, GARCÍA RODAS RUTH, BARRAL QUINTANA FABIOLA, GARCÍA RODAS BILMA, RENJIFO FLORES NELI, RAMOS SAUZA PRIMITIVA, GARNISEL RENJIFO SEFERINA, FLORES CHAVEZ NELLY, MAMANI PALLE FELIPA, ABREGO MARGARITA CRISTINA, GUZMAN GASTON, ARREDONDO ADRIANA, AGUILAR GABRIELA.

MÉDICOS DEL MUNDO: GABRIELA GASPAR, ANDREA LAZZERI, NATALIA BAUMAN, LUZ MARÍA DÍAZ

CTRO. COMUNICACIÓN I.C.A.: MARÍA ROCÍO DOMÍNGUEZ, CARLOS MARÍA RIVERO

¿PORQUÉ Y PARA QUÉ UN MAPA?

Porque es una herramienta que permite que todos y todas PARTICIPEMOS en forma igualitaria, porque somos parte del mismo lugar y conocemos nuestro territorio. El mapa es una herramienta que está "viva", que habla de nuestros problemas, de nuestros SABERES. También habla de que nos falta y lo que tenemos, de nuestras actividades, de nuestros futuros proyectos...



NUESTRO HOGAR III - AMPLIACIÓN -CORTADEROS SUR -

MAP #2

La Cañada Real, Galiana

Democracia,
Santiago Cirugeda
and Todo Por la Praxis
(Madrid)